

**King County Agriculture Commission
Minutes from September 14, 2006
Gibson Hall Kiwanis
Issaquah**

Commissioners Present: Nancy Hutto, George Irwin, Bob Tidball, Ben Kodama, Bob Vos, Larry Pickering, Judy Taylor

Commissioners Absent: Roger Calhoun, Michael Blakely, Year Eng, Rob Holland, Ewing Stringfellow, Grant Davidson

Staff: Steve Evans, Judy Herring, Claire Dyckman, Jason Lindahl, Sarah Fickeisen, King County (KC) Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD) Agriculture Programs.

Guest Agency Staff: Josh Monahan, King Conservation District (KCD)

Guests: Debbie Higgins

Nancy Hutto called the meeting to order.

Commission Roundabout:

Judy Taylor: showed sheep at the Puyallup Fair. Nancy Hutto: resided at the fair, selling honey. A lot of honeycomb has been introduced. She will be pulling bees down from the mountains soon. Bob Vos: has turned his animals into his large lawn to pasture. George Irwin: it was a summer of fairs and a lot of 4H. Bob Tidball: the strawberry patch is irrigated and plants still look good. Ben Kodama is still startling individuals when he introduces himself as an Ag Commissioner. “What’s an Ag Commissioner?” Larry Pickering is trying to develop low sugar hay for horses, and is learning from his mistakes...

Motion: Bob Tidball moved that the Prosecuting Attorney revisit the legal issues related to allowing revenues from sale of FPP parcels to be redirected to a new to a new FPP program that will not have the same constraints. Motion passed.

Bob Vos requested that the Prosecuting Attorney attend the Regulatory Committee so the members might have a first hand exchange on these issues.

Staff Report: Steve Evans reported on the Ag Commission web site and noted there would be a Town Hall Meeting “Rural Issues” in Carnation, Monday, 10-12, September 25th. The Focus on Farming Conference will be held in Lynnwood on Nov 30th. Topic include agro-tourism; dairies, nurseries.

Judy Herring reported that the Regulatory Committee Meeting would work on FPP Deeds and Covenants at its meeting on September 27th, from 1-3 PM at WSU Extension in Renton. She reported that they received mitigation funds from the condemnation of the Muth-Polygon property and will present the Commission with alternatives for use of those funds in the near future.

Agency Reports:

King Conservation District (KCD) Josh Monaghan announced three events: Harvest Celebration, October 7th; Farming and the Environment’s “Vim Wright Stewardship Dinner” on

September 21st; Mid-Sound Fisheries' "Have a Dog for Salmon" event. He noted there was a grant program for Ag Pilot Projects.

Presentation on Deer Control by Bruce Richards, WDFW.

- Hunting seasons definitely help with deer, but it is naïve to think that killing deer alone will solve the problem. You are allowed to get a permit to shoot one animal per year. However, there is a restriction on firearms west of Hwy 18 – only shotguns are allowed.
- Elk are also a problem, especially with Christmas trees and corn. Either put up a fence at least 6 ft. high; or put in an electric fence before you plant crops/garden and entice deer/elk to it with peanut butter or such to introduce them to the zap! Put another strand or two of fence line below the top one – deer will crawl under fences.
- A Commissioner said some people are winding fishing line around rose or raspberry bushes, about belt high, then a foot below. etc... seems to deter the deer.
- Dogs work temporarily until the deer become used to them.
- You may claim commercial damage by elk by calling WDFW Enforcement – Shaun Carrol at 9902-2692 in Olympia. They will initiate a process to compensate you.
- There is a link on the WDFW web site to "Nuisance Deer" if you would like information.

Bruce Richards brought two items of concern to the Ag Commission: Elk can carry TB and wasting disease; Sitka and other exotic species of deer are imported, bringing a louse that makes the deer hairless. The latter are often considered an ag product, yet no one is regulating them. They are now considered a deleterious species and WDFW will remove them. However, agricultural interests might want to be more proactive in addressing this type of issue.

Presentation on Windshield Survey and Ag on Vashon

Sarah Fickeisen presented a summary of Agriculture on Vashon, including the results of the Windshield Survey that she and Jason Lindahl conducted as interns, working with Rick Reinlasoder. Sarah is a farmer on Vashon, and a member of the Vashon Island Growers Association.

Discussion ensued; Commissioners wondered if there had been any enterprise analysis to determine infrastructure needs, market potential. "Are they viable?" Or people who like to grow things and are very successful?" Sarah responded that there are two types – a few self sufficient agricultural enterprises, others part-time efforts. Perhaps 3-5 farms are making it as vegetable growers alone. Commissioners asked whether this "micro-agriculture" is agriculture, or rural lifestyle? While it is producing food, might it be related to the proposed Rural Commission, and to The Executive's "self-sustainable" initiative.

Presentation on the King County Fair by George Irwin. At the request of the Chair, George Irwin reviewed the status of the Fair, working from the article in the Capitol Press by Cookson Beecher and from his own involvement. The County gave the City of Enumclaw \$2,000,000 the Fair "off its back". Enumclaw may or may not develop this into an equestrian center. There will be a retreat at the end of September to talk about its future. A survey with a 30% return indicated that people came to the fair for 1) youth programs and animals, 2) rides and 3) food. George suggests that it will be healthy if Enumclaw runs the fair because it is more in their economic self-interest.

Public Comment: Debbie Higgins requested advice from the Ag Commission regarding a market for her Grady A goat dairy outside of Duvall. Her enterprise is small, as is the market. She summarized her experience with PCC, pointing out that regional providers may be able to supply larger amounts of product, yet they must transport their product much longer distances than small local providers – not as “green” a practice. It is very difficult for small enterprises that are undercapitalized to make it. Several Commissioners offered suggestions, some of which she had tried. Ms. Higgins is dedicated to keeping her dairy and animals going, but doesn’t know where to turn.

Old Business:

Chair, staff and Commission discussed the fall calendar, the status of work items.

New Business:

Size of/Cost of New Farm Residences: Judy Taylor wanted to know if the Commission would begin to address the issue of “mansions” of farmland – the fact that the homes that are going up will be unaffordable by most people who want to farm in the future. Comments included developing a way to “bank” the residential rights when developing new covenants for FPP parcels; and to address size and type of house. The Regulatory Committee could look at what other states are doing to address this pervasive problem.

Nancy Hutto adjourned the meeting.